

emotions and enthusiasms of which we know little in our colder day. A trifle might start a movement which the wisest could not explain nor the most powerful restrain. It was during the preaching of this crusade [of 1208, against the Albigenses] that villages and towns in Germany were filled with women who, unable to expend their religious ardor in taking the cross, stripped themselves naked and ran silently through the roads and streets. Still more symptomatic of the diseased spirituality of the time was the*crusade of the children, which desolated thousands of homes. From vast districts of territory, incited apparently by a simultaneous and spontaneous impulse, crowds of children set forth, without leaders or guides, in search of the Holy Land ; and their only answer, when questioned as to their object, was that they were going to Jerusalem. Vainly did parents lock their children up; they would break loose and disappear ; and the few who eventually found their way home again could give no reason for the overmastering longing which had carried them away. Nor must we lose sight of other and less creditable springs of action which brought to all crusades the vile, who came for license and spoil, and the base, who sought the immunity conferred by the quality of crusader." /

" To comprehend fully the magnitude and influence of these movements we must bear in mind the impressionable character of the populations and their readiness to yield to contagious emotion. When we are told that the Franciscan Berthold of Ratisbon frequently preached to crowds of sixty thousand souls, we realize what power was lodged in the hands of those who could reach masses so easily swayed and so full of blind yearnings to

escape from the
ignoble life to which they were condemned. How
the slumber-
ing souls were awakened is shown by the successive
waves of
excitement which swept over one portion of Europe
after another
about the middle of the thirteenth century. The
dumb, untutored
minds began to ask whether an existence of
hopeless and brutal
misery was all that was to be realized from the
promises of the
gospel. The church had made no real effort at
internal reform ;
it was still grasping, covetous, licentious, and a
strange desire

* Lea, *Inquis.*, I, 147.